

# MINORITY REPORT,

OF A

COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION  
OF CONNECTICUT,

ON THE

## SIN OF SLAVERY.

*Presented, June 1849, at the meeting of the Association, at  
Salisbury; Conn.*

To the General Association of Connecticut :

The undersigned, having been appointed on a Committee which was to report at the meeting of the Association, in Salisbury, has met repeatedly with his colleagues, for the purpose of preparing a report which might combine the views and obtain the assent of the whole Committee; but while cordially agreeing with some of the opinions which the report of the majority contains, he was compelled to the conclusion that it did not take that position, which is now evidently demanded of the Church, and which was expected by those who appointed us. He therefore respectfully submits the following Report.

At the last meeting of the Association in Hartford, June, 1848, the following preamble and resolution were introduced :

"WHEREAS it is matter of common fame that large numbers of the members and ministers of the Presbyterian Churches are Slaveholders: and also that cruelties and wrongs are extensively inflicted on the Slave for which no discipline is inflicted,

"And whereas the General Association of Connecticut has long exchanged Christian civilities and delegates with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church [meeting annually] which friendly intercourse gives us the right and duty of expostulation in case of alleged gross departure from soundness in doctrine, or from justice and rectitude in conduct,

"Therefore resolved, that a Committee of three be appointed to prepare a letter of inquiry and expostulation as to the aforesaid matters of grievance, and that our delegate to the next meeting of the General Assembly be instructed to carry such letter to them."

This Resolution was very fully discussed; and in its main features met with the approbation of one-half, at least, of the Association. The course recommended in it was delicate and respect-

ful—terminating in a friendly letter of inquiry. After protracted discussion, one gentleman proposed,—*not the rejection of the resolution*—but a simple postponement for a moment, that he might read a substitute. This proposal of so brief a postponement was met with a tie vote, and carried by the voice of the Moderator. The substitute was then read, and carried by a vote, almost unanimous: and is as follows:

“WHEREAS this Association is in the dark respecting the discipline exercised by certain ecclesiastical bodies in correspondence with us in regard to the sin of Slavery,

“Therefore resolved, that a Committee of three be appointed by this body to collect facts and make inquiries respecting this subject, and make report to the next General Association.

“And that Rev. Dr. Bacon, Rev. Messrs. Perkins and Atwater, be said Committee.”

It will be perceived that this document is much more decided and energetic in its terms and proposed action, than the one first proposed: that it speaks of Slavery as a sin; and makes it necessary to bring up the whole matter for consideration again—which the original resolutions did not. The undersigned therefore could not but receive these facts as indication of a deep and earnest feeling in the Association, that they had important duties to the slave and the slaveholder: duties which were to be met by kind, but firm Christian faithfulness.

It was gratifying also to learn that other ecclesiastical bodies in New England, at about the same time, had made arrangements similar to our own, for ascertaining and performing their duty towards those Churches which are connected with Slavery. All these simultaneous yet disconnected movements, are indications of a wide spread and rising public opinion, that the Churches of the Free States generally, as well as of Connecticut, should take a more decided and active position, antagonistic to Slavery.

The General Convention of Vermont, at their meeting, June 20, 1848, after assenting to a strong statement as to the nature and sin of slaveholding, resolved, “that this Convention appoint a Committee to consider thoroughly whether it is or is not the duty of this body to withhold fellowship from individual Churches and other ecclesiastical bodies on account of their practice or toleration of slaveholding: and particularly whether our present connection with the two General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, ought not to cease on account of their continued toleration of this gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature: and that such Committee make a written report of their opinions together with the reasons of them, to this Convention at its next annual meeting.”

The Convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts at their meeting in 1848, appointed a Committee to draw up "a solemn and earnest appeal to the community on this momentous subject"—[Slaveholding in the Churches.]

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, last year addressed a letter of exhortation, to the General Assembly, on their connection with Slavery. Various ecclesiastical bodies in Scotland and Ireland and Canada, have done likewise.

Your Committee are happy therefore to find this additional evidence, that in the duty assigned to them by the Association, their course is one sanctioned by the best ecclesiastical authority and eminently in unison with Christian propriety and duty.

We are still more gratified that the General Assembly itself, regards our action with favor; for the Rev. gentleman, who represented the General Assembly [Old School] on the floor of the Association, candidly and publicly avowed, after the solemn and almost unanimous vote, by which this Committee was appointed,—that "*He regarded the late action of the Association as calculated to increase and perpetuate, not weaken the bonds of fraternal union.*" As the constituted organ of that body, he probably conveys to us their views; so that we are happy in having the approbation of the General Assembly in our present course of investigation. His statement will at once remove the fear which some have expressed — that our agitation of the matter is offensive to the South, and endangers our friendly relations with Southern Christians. He assured us, on the contrary that he was "gratified" with our action.

The resolution under which we act says nothing of the *atrocities* and *cruelties* sometimes alleged to exist in connexion with Slavery. Nor could the Association have designed that we should enter on that subject, for they did expressly *lay aside* a resolution which alluded to *such topics*, and adopted the present one as a substitute. We were enjoined to inquire concerning the "*Sin of Slavery*," and the discipline exercised therefor. In commissioning us however to collect facts and make inquiries, they well understood that we had no legal powers, and could not pursue the course of legislative Committees clothed with authority to procure evidence. Of course they could not have expected us to come with affidavits and judicial documents. But we were to use all those means of information which candid and intelligent Christian men could find, and were to lay the result before the Association.

The resolution does not specify the ecclesiastical bodies whose course was to be made the subject of inquiry. But the Committee could not long remain in doubt as to the direction in which they were to look. For of all the ecclesiastical bodies with which

we are in correspondence, there are only two which have Churches—or many churches—under their care in the slaveholding states. These are the two Presbyterian bodies, each styled, “General Assembly.” Under their jurisdiction are one thousand or more Churches within the states where Slavery prevails. Of course then, these must be “the certain ecclesiastical bodies” with which we are concerned in this report.

The *first* inquiry then which it was obviously the duty of the Committee to institute was this:—*Is slavery, or slaveholding, common among the members of the Churches alluded to?* On this point, we did not deem it necessary to go into any formal and elaborate investigation, because the facts are so well known,—being matters indeed of perfect and undeniable notoriety.

Rev. James Smylie, a Presbyterian clergyman of Mississippi, in a pamphlet written in defence of Slavery states that *three-fourths* of all Presbyterian Church members at the South, are slaveholders. This statement has been freely assented to by other gentlemen, equally well qualified to judge. Professed Christian people at the South conform to the usages of the country, in procuring, and holding slaves; and as matter of course their work is done by slaves. This fact is freely allowed on all sides, both by those who deny and those who assert the right and propriety of holding slaves.

But not only do individuals who are members of the Church hold slaves, but *Churches* and ecclesiastical bodies, in their official or Church capacity hold Slaves. For it appears that in the year 1845, eight slaves, were sold at public auction together with cattle and furniture in behalf of the “Directors of the Theological Seminary of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia.” It also appears, that some Churches at the South, are in the habit of raising the salaries of their pastors by owning Slaves, and jobbing or hiring them out annually to the highest bidder. A moments’ reflection will convince us, that for obvious reasons the condition of a Slave hired out to one who has no farther interest in him than for the year, must be much harder, than the hard condition of one living with his owner. It is therefore reported to the Association as a fact, *that Slaveholding prevails to an enormous extent among the Presbyterian Churches at the South.*

But the true state of the case is not submitted, with the bare statement of these facts. For to many minds these facts are supposed only to establish the position, that many members of Presbyterian Churches at the South, sustain a “mere relation” to the slaves:—while it is also maintained that the fact of sustaining a mere relation, which the law has established, implies no sin whatever—that if the *law* has established the relation of slave and

slaveholder — then the individual slaveholder is no more accountable for sustaining that relationship than the slave himself.

The Committee were entirely of one mind as to the truth of this position,—viz: that a *relation established solely by the law, implies no guilt* in one whom the law invests with that particular relation: *so long as it remains true*, that it is a “mere relation:” a mere act of the law, which implies and involves no individual act. But when the individual *acts* in that relation, and by virtue of that relation, and uses the power which that legal relation gives him—then he *ceases* to stand in a “mere relation:”—and the *individuals’ own act* is now concerned, which may be right or wrong according to circumstances. Thus did Southern law simply proclaim that every black man should be the slave of the white man who lived nearest to him, that law would institute a “mere relation,” for which the white neighbor is neither blameable nor accountable, unless he gave his assent to the law, and while he allows the law to remain a dead letter. But so soon as he attempts to *take advantage* of the law, compels the black man to work for him, uses the authority which the law gives him over his colored neighbor, and holds him liable to all the incidents of slavery:—then he cannot plead his innocence on the ground of a “mere relation.” There is in the case individual action in that relation— which individual action, like all other individual acts, is to be tried by certain tests of right and wrong.

The undersigned humbly submits, that this last case represents the state of the mass of slaveholding Church members. There are cases no doubt, in which slave property falls by inheritance to a minor. While that heir is a minor, it is strictly true, that he sustains a “mere relation:” a relation which he did not originate: which, in his case, is the mere creature of law; and which he has no power to terminate: and for which, of course, he is not accountable. But when he ceases to be a minor, and has legal power to act, and does *act* in any way towards those slaves *as slaves*, then the “mere relation” ceases: and whether his action be right or wrong he can no longer allege in justification that he sustains a “mere relation.” His conduct towards a certain class of his fellow beings is now to be investigated. But while there are these and other cases in which a “mere relation” exists, the fact is not true of the great mass of cases: and our inquiry now relates to <sup>o</sup> men who *act* in the relation of slaveholders.

It is necessary to advert very distinctly to this point, and to recur to it again and again—because the design and meaning of those who plead for ecclesiastical action towards slaveholders, is evidently misunderstood:—they are supposed to affirm that ~~which~~ they never dreamed of; and positions are solemnly laid down and argued, as if against them, which they have never denied. The

sentiment stated in the following vote of the General Assembly [New School] has been for substance repeated many times, as if it was the point in debate between them and those who wished for decisive ecclesiastical action. They say, in 1846, and repeated, 1849,—“We cannot pronounce a judgment of general and promiscuous condemnation implying that destitution of Christian principles and feelings which should exclude from the table of the Lord, *ALL who stand in the legal relation* of masters and slaves, or justify us in withholding our ecclesiastical and Christian fellowship from them.”

So far as the undersigned is aware, the General Assembly has never been requested to take any such step; and certainly not by this Association. No one asserts that a “mere legal relation,” is the sin of any persons, except of those who instituted it. But it is affirmed that of the thousands of slaveholders in the Presbyterian Church, with but here and there an exception, they are “voluntary slaveholders”—they do *not* MERELY “stand in a legal relation” but *USE THE POWER given by that legal relation* to hold their fellow-men as slaves: depriving them of their most precious and sacred rights. *Such* slaveholders, we conceive should not receive “ecclesiastical and Christian fellowship.” But we are compelled to believe that the mass of slaveholding members and ministers of the Presbyterian Churches, *are* such slaveholders: and we see no effort made by those Churches, to rid themselves of *such* slaveholders:—on the contrary, their discipline is limited to cases of “cruel treatment,” so called, the true nature of which we shall have occasion to examine.

Slaveholding Church members at the South, *use the power*, which the law gives them: they use it in compelling their slaves to work for them without wages—they use it, to *retain* them as slaves—thereby exposing each human being so retained to the horrible danger of being sold as a mere chattel, at the death or bankruptcy of the master—they use it in preventing the slave father from educating his child as he would wish, and from training him to such a trade as he would prefer:—they use it by treating as a slave, every child born of his slaves. All this, to say no more, is true of every voluntary slaveholder whether in the Church or not. The case is not at all met therefore by the mere truism, that a man is not to blame, for a mere legal relation, or for the mere possession of a power which the law gives him.

Somewhat analogous to the position just alluded to, is another, which is often stated in debates as to the propriety of ecclesiastical action. It is this for substance,—“that if the slaveholder treats his slaves well, we are not authorized to inflict censure for the mere fact of his being a slaveholder.”

But it is necessary to ascertain what is meant by the phrase,

good treatment, in the language of a slaveholding community? It is to be feared the habit of regarding one class of human beings as slaves, as property—bought and sold as property—and in the language of the law “chattels personal to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever,” must almost necessarily modify the ideas of one so situated, as to what conduct in that relation is right. Thus, for instance, we regard a horse, as a horse; and man as sustaining to him, the relation of rightful owner. Now right conduct or good treatment in that particular relation, means, of course, that which is *good treatment towards a horse*. But it is perfectly evident that a course of treatment which would universally be esteemed just and kind towards a horse, would be cruel and brutal if rendered to a *man*. A modification somewhat analogous must take place in our interpretation of the assertions of the proper conduct and kind treatment, observed generally towards *slaves*. Habitually regarded as belonging to an inferior and degraded race, stripped by the law of all legal rights: almost entirely at the mercy of the owner: bought, sold, and exchange like any other property, asserted *good treatment* towards a slave, means *such* good treatment as is appropriate to a degraded chattel, not such treatment as a man can claim. This must be remembered, when public statements are made of good conduct and treatment to the slave.

Thus, for instance, *we* should consider it the height of injustice and atrocity, if a Church of five hundred members, some of them rich men, should, because the *law*, or a “mere relation” enabled them so to do, compel some twenty of their number to work out at hire, and should take the whole of their wages wherewith to pay the salary of the Pastor, leaving it a mere peradventure whether they should ever hear the Gospel which they thus support. *We* should consider this no less than outrage and robbery, if *men* were thus compelled to work, and *their* wages thus used, while all the rest of the Congregation paid little or nothing. But this is considered and styled *good treatment* towards the slave—provided, the slave is comfortably fed and clothed. And it is the testimony of one who well knows, “that what would be regarded at the north, as wrong, cruel and oppressive [towards men] is regarded, as mild, lenient and courteous treatment towards a slave.”

Further: *we* should consider it as bad conduct in the relation of laborer and employer, if the employer for any reason should *strike a man* whom he hired: it would not be endured for a moment; legal redress would be obtained, and Church discipline enforced. But the chastisement of *slaves* either with the hand or the whip, more or less “*moderately*,” for what the master deems an offence, is considered very proper conduct in that relation. *We* should consider it the last and extremest outrage upon a *man*,

if for any crime, and after due and impartial trial in court, with all the aid of legal advisors, he should be sold to Turkey or Algiers, or even to a cotton planter. But if a *slave* commits no higher crime than being fractious and lazy,—which means that he has enough of the spirit of a man to desire liberty and wages—it is considered *proper conduct* towards the *slave*, at the mere will of the master, without court, trial or jury, to sell *such an one* to the far South. It would be very criminal conduct towards a *man*, or the *child of a man*, to deny him the opportunity of learning the rudiments of education, including not only reading, but writing, arithmetic and geography. But even some “good masters” do not teach their *slaves* to read: and it is considered, as proper conduct in the relation to prevent a *slave’s child* from learning to write, to cypher, and understand geography. We consider it an atrocious act to deprive a *man* of liberty without crime and due process of law: yet thousands of Church members retain *slaves*: i. e., use the power which the law gives them, to deprive the *slaves* of liberty without crime alleged, and such conduct is proper in that relation. It would be one of the most cruel wrongs to prevent a *man* from educating his own child, and fitting him for the highest attainable intelligence and respectability in future life:—but in the relation of slaveholder it is considered proper and right for the master to take the *slave’s child*, and train him up without reference to the wishes of the parent, in such ways and to such business as will make him profitable to the owner. Indeed the mere fact that a *man* is held as a slave, proves that he is not well treated as a *man*.

In these remarks we have cautiously abstained from alluding to what is called “cruel treatment”—such as insufficiency of food and clothing: torturing and murderous punishments, by the cat, the paddle, and the fire. We are entirely willing to believe that *such kinds* of outrages are not common among Church members at the South, and in case of attainable evidence, would be discountenanced and disciplined. That class of facts, the Association did not commission us to investigate. But it was our object to show that in the simple fact, that thousands of Presbyterian Church members at the South held Slaves, there was involved a great deal more than a “mere relation,” that if the slaveholder persists in continuing to hold slaves *as slaves*, there is necessarily involved in most cases, gross outrages on them *as men*: and that conduct which towards *men*, would be resented as unchristian and barbarous, is esteemed appropriate to the *slave*. We desired also to suggest a principle of interpretation by which the terms “good and kind treatment towards the slave” might be understood.

We are also to remember that all our evidence as to the “good treatment” of slaves is *interested testimony*. It is drawn princi-



pally from the *slaveholders themselves*: with some corroborative statements from the friends and associates of the slaveholders, identified with them in race, color, and prejudice. The testimony of the *slave* is not received. Among the twenty thousand slaves who have emigrated from the land of bondage within the last fifteen years, are many who are themselves members of churches, and who have served slaveholding Church members. They, or many of them, give very different testimony: they assert that they felt most keenly that the mere fact of being held as slaves was cruel treatment—and moreover declare, that gross personal cruelties are practised to a great extent by slaveholding Church members, unrebuked and unnoticed by ecclesiastical authorities. This testimony is usually set aside without ceremony, under the plea that it is interested testimony. But the undersigned humbly submit that the slave is as well qualified to judge as the slaveholder, whether his treatment is kind or cruel—that the slaveholder is under the strongest possible influence to give a favorable account of his own conduct: and that therefore if the testimony of the slave be set aside on the ground alluded to, then the slaveholder's testimony should also be rejected, for the same reason. Then we should simply be led to decide upon the question, divested of all extraneous matter, in what light are we to regard the Church member, who takes advantage of wicked laws to hold *men* as slaves, and use them *as slaves*, an act "which is utterly at variance with the law of God"—"which violates the most sacred rights of human nature."

Our *second* inquiry must of course be:—Is *discipline* ever inflicted for the sin of slavery?—The answer is plain, and known to every one. *Slaveholders, as such, are never disciplined nor questioned.* The propriety of this course, is usually argued on the ground repeatedly alluded to, that the Church should inflict no censure on the slaveholder for a "mere relation," but only for some overt acts of cruelty proved against him. It will be conceded on all sides, that the "mere relation" of slave owner, implies no guilt. One case of this kind has already been stated, that of a minor, in whom the law of inheritance vests property in slaves. There may be cases in which, for the purpose of *ransoming slaves*, and giving them freedom, it may be necessary to take a bill of sale, and thus be placed for a few days in a certain legal relation to the one so ransomed from bondage. In such cases, and in analogous ones, which need not be enumerated, there can be no blame, and of course, no call for discipline. But these cases are but exceptions, and rare exceptions. It will become necessary therefore to examine the general rule of discipline, applicable to the case of slaveholders who are, or propose to be, members of the Church. One general principle may thus be stated:

*In case of connection and participation in any enormity, the prima facie evidence of guilt is strong, and Christian character is only to be imputed and Church privileges granted when there is positive evidence, in each individual case that such connection is unavoidable or justifiable.* Let us apply this statement to slaveholding.

That Slavery, as a system, is a great enormity, only a few fanatics affect to doubt. The language on this subject, used by ecclesiastical bodies, and by eminent men, is very decisive and strong. Even the General Assembly declared, many years ago, before the influences of the present day from the South were pressing on them—that the enslaving of a human being, “is a violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature—and utterly at variance with the law of God.” The American Board speak of “the whole system as based on unrighteous principles, and violates the natural rights of man.” The great founder of Methodism, styled it “the sum of all villainies.”

If this language is correct, and it has been purposely selected from those who could not be suspected of ultraism, then any connexion or participation in the system, involves a grave responsibility. Whoever voluntarily connects himself with “a violation of the most precious rights of man:” whoever is found participating in a system “utterly at variance with the law of God,” “and based on unrighteous principles”—has clear *presumptive evidence* of great guilt upon him; and so far as *prima facie* evidence goes, is himself living in utter violation of the law of God, and practising the sum of all villainies. It is readily conceded that this clear and strong presumptive evidence may be cleared away: that individuals may bring full proof that their connexion with the system is unavoidable or justifiable: but this *is not to be taken for granted*. And when the presumptive and positive evidence is clear and strong, *the individual must be held to the proof*, that his participation in this system of abominations is involuntary or innocent.

These are the principles we apply when we speak of “discipline for the sin of slavery”. It is not maintained as some appear to suppose, that a “mere relation,” *ipso facto*, and without any farther inquiry should be the occasion of exclusion from Church fellowship. We desire no such thing. But the position taken is this: that at the South there is an institution, “utterly at variance with the law of God”—“founded in unrighteousness”—and “which violates the most sacred rights of man:” yet thousands remain in the Presbyterian Churches who are voluntarily and perseveringly partaking in all the acts, relations and advantages of this system, without the slightest inquiry being made into the nature

of that relation, without a question asked as to the reasons which might justify a Christian's connection with such a system of abominations; that they allow such an immense proportion of their members to continue unrebuked with such strong presumptive evidence of partaking in all the guilt of such a system, without calling on them in a single instance, to rebut this *prima facie* evidence, by any testimony that they are excusable or justifiable in holding slaves.

The undersigned thinks that men's judgment would be unanimous in any analogous case. Thus for instance the system of *piracy*, is "utterly at variance with the law of God"—"a violation of the most sacred rights of human nature." Now if any one should be captured in a pirate ship, and be found among the crew, doing the ordinary work and fighting of a pirate sailor; that would be considered *prima facie* and sufficient evidence that he *was* a pirate, and he would be condemned accordingly. Still there would be room for counter testimony. He might be able to prove that his presence on board that ship was involuntary,—that he had been forced on board and compelled there to work—and that his connection with the pirate ship was one which involved no guilt on his part. But before acquitting him, and much more, before receiving him to the Church, we should expect that the strong presumptive evidence in his case, should be fully met and refuted. Just so, when one partakes in the atrocious system of slavery, by buying or holding a slave, it is righteously demanded of him, before we accord to him Christian fellowship, that he prove his connection to be involuntary, or justifiable. There is unquestionably a distinction between "slavery as a system, and the act of slaveholding." Slavery as a system is unspeakably bad; but it does not follow that the "mere relation" in every case, is wicked. Yet if the "system" is so bad, then connexion with it is *presumptive evidence* of want of Christian character. Persons are to be received in Christian fellowship only on proof, that their individual connexion with it, is excusable.

Indeed this rule of discipline and evidence might be carried much further, as it has been of late by a large Convention of the Congregational ministers of Massachusetts and other States, assembled in Boston, May 31, 1849, who united in a public and solemn declaration of their views on the subject of Temperance.—They unanimously declare that admission to the Church was denied to those who drank or used intoxicating drinks in any degree, "*not because they might not in some cases be good men, but because while they continued this course, they did not give proper evidence of being good men.*" Nor was this considered as setting up a new test of evidence of religion, but it was viewed as

more correctly applying the Scriptural test, which through ignorance, had not been so correctly applied in such cases before."

Surely if the comparatively petty act of taking occasionally and moderately intoxicating drinks, may rightfully shut out even good men from the Church, because that one constructive sin, outweighed all the evidence of piety in his case—then the act of using cruel slave laws, to hold a fellow being in that most revolting condition—*as a slave*—a condition, which every MAN, in his own case would regard as the extremest evil and wrong,—may properly be deemed *prima facie* evidence of sin, justifying, nay demanding exclusion from the Church, until proof is rendered of the rightfulness of such slaveholding. Yet tens of thousands of such slaveholders are in the Presbyterian Church, without rebuke, question, or notice.

We are aware that reasoning of this kind is met by the assertion that "discipline is inflicted for bad treatment;" and that for the mere relation, with good treatment, discipline ought not to be inflicted. This topic has been already noticed, and it appears that the mass of slaveholding Church members do *not* merely "sustain a relation." They *hold* slaves—and exercise the powers and prerogatives of owners and masters. They are not and cannot be, sheltered therefore under the plea of a "mere relation."

Some suggestions have been already made as to the nature of this alleged kind treatment. Is it meant simply that unusual and torturing punishments are not inflicted? that the slaves have a sufficiency of food and clothing? We have reason to believe that these items constitute the amount of what is called kind treatment of a slave, in a slaveholder's nomenclature. But there still remain much cruel treatment, never noticed or considered such in slaveholding states. It is our opinion that kind treatment implies the following facts:—1st. That the slave have free permission to emigrate to any free state or country whenever he may choose. 2d. That he be retained in that most revolting condition, a slave, no longer than he pleases. 3d. That when he is hired out, he shall have a right to all his own earnings. 4th. That he shall never be struck after becoming a man or woman, without a fair trial, like any other man. 5th. That whether he work for his alleged owner, or some one else, he shall receive such wages as he may himself be willing to work for, like any other man.—6th. That he shall have a right to obtain all the education which he wishes for himself and his children, and to go when he thinks these advantages can be best procured.

*Nothing less than this can be considered kind treatment towards MEN AND WOMEN.* Any thing less than this we should consider as cruel and unchristian wrong towards ourselves. Now

if the slaveholding ministers and Church members at the South, render *such* treatment towards their slaves, then all difference between us is settled, and we cordially extend to them the right hand of fellowship. In that case, there is a "mere relation" which involves no blame on their part. But so far as our information extends, these items are not involved in the Southern idea of "good treatment" and of course the proof of good treatment, as *they understand the term*, still leaves the prima facie evidence of gross wrong perpetrated on the slave as clear and strong as ever.

It has sometimes been argued, that the bodies, each styled "General Assembly" with whom we have ecclesiastical intercourse, have freed themselves from all responsibility in the matters discussed in this Report, by their repeated and explicit condemnation of the whole system of Slavery. But the facts which are alleged as proof of this position, constitute a part of the painful evidence that in this matter there is deep and mournful unsoundness calling for remonstrance and rebuke. True, the General Assembly has declared in 1818 that "the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another is utterly at variance with the law of God;" and "a violation of the most sacred rights of man." What then have they done? Taken any measures to purge their Church of so foul a blot? Not in the least. There are now tens of thousands of their Church members habitually doing what is utterly at variance with the law of God. There have been in past times probably a *hundred thousand* and more of their Church members living in this enormous sin, according to their own acknowledgement; and yet there *never was a solitary* use of discipline, for participation in this public and notorious and acknowledged violation of the divine law.

It is plain therefore that for a long time this sin has been cherished in the bosom of their Church. For it is not to be supposed that these tens or hundreds of thousands of slaveholders, were all in such "*peculiar*" circumstances, that they were innocent or involuntary in their sin.

We are compelled therefore to take the ground that the Presbyterian Church, judged by her own confessions and statements, is deeply implicated in the guilt of upholding and sanctioning slavery. In 1787, the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, then constituting the highest judicatory of the Church, declared, "they do highly approve the interest which many of the states have taken, in *promoting the abolition of slavery*:" thus distinctly recognizing its unchristian nature. Yet since that time they have allowed the number of slaveholding members and ministers in their Church to increase without a note of remonstrance or objection, and have repeatedly exalted slaveholders to the dignity of members and moderators in the General Assembly.

In 1795 the General Assembly "assured all the Churches under their care that they view with the deepest concern *any vestiges* of slavery which may exist in our country." Yet during the subsequent fifty years slaveholding has increased; more of their own members are slaveholders; one of their theological seminaries is partly endowed by the ownership and sale of slaves; some of her own ministers are supported by jobbing out slaves; her Churches and Sessions admit thousands of slaveholders to membership without objecting to such slaveholding.

In 1818 the General Assembly declared "we consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ." Yet for thirty years from that time, they have admitted and retained tens of thousands of members, who are *habitually, publicly and notoriously living in a practice "totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principle of the Gospel."* They have selected for their moderators, men, who, according to their own solemn recorded judgment, were openly living in a public sin, "totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel." Nay, as if to make it plain that they (General Assembly, Old School) have since *deliberately adopted* this sin, they solemnly voted in 1845, that it [slaveholding] *is no bar to Christian communion*, as it is found in the Southern portion of our country." We are thus compelled to see that the General Assembly, is not merely afflicted with a sin, which she is endeavoring in vain to remove—(as all Churches occasionally must be)—but has practically adopted and defended slaveholding, and introduced to her communion, tens of thousands of members, publicly living in a practice acknowledged to be "totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel!"

It is very true, that the General Assembly has *since*, condemned in emphatic terms, "cruel treatment"—"undue severity"—and such like modes of treatment. But such facts only compel us to revert again to the true meaning of such terms in slaveholding nomenclatures. *What is cruel treatment?* Is it not cruel treatment, to deprive a man, woman or child of personal liberty, without crime proved or alleged? Is it not cruel to *retain* a human being in a condition in which he can never appeal to the laws for protection against any crime however atrocious? Is it not cruel to take advantage of any laws, which authorize us to compel a brother man to work for us without wages? Is it not cruel to "violate the most precious and sacred rights of human nature?" Yet these and other things are necessarily involved in each individual case of *voluntary* slaveholding. We are compelled therefore to remain unsatisfied with these disclaimers and condemnations of cruel treatment: for we thus see that the slave may be

"well treated," and "kindly dealt with," at a slave in the honest estimation of the slaveholder and those who sympathize with him, while at the same time, nearly all the rights of that slave, as a man and those most precious and sacred, are habitually outraged.

It is impossible therefore, for the undersigned to concur in the views of those who think that either of the General Assemblies have taken higher ground in relation to slavery of late years than that on which they formerly stood. Their strongest and purest declarations were made *thirty or fifty years ago*. Recently the matter has been to some extent discussed in their meetings: and their former statements have been re-affirmed. But such facts only bring out into more startling prominence the humiliating truth, that tens of thousands of Church members, participating actively in "enslaving one part of the human race," a sin which they know to be a public sin — which they know to be "totally at variance with the law of God" and "utterly irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel"—are still received and retained in the Church. There is surely no indication of progress in the right direction, when no principles are put forth now which were not advanced fifty years ago: and when the number of slaveholders in the Church is much greater than it was then.

It might be difficult at any one time to begin to affect the ecclesiastical standing of members already in the Church. But there could be no valid objection to applying the principles of the Gospel to those who are to be admitted. Yet for fifty years, and at the present time, the Presbyterian Church *continues to admit*, those who "enslave one part of the human race," without questioning them as to their participation in that fearful sin.

Neither can the undersigned concur in the friendly excuse, which he hears from all quarters, for the present position of the Presbyterian Church. He is often assured "that Southern Christians are in the dark"—"that the Churches at the South are a hundred years behind the age"—"that in their circumstances, they cannot be expected to have the light, and enlightened consciences which we at the North have"—"that we are to make the same apology for them, which we do for the falsehood and polygamy of Abraham"—"that with them, slaveholding is a sin of ignorance."

It is unnecessary to say that these excuses, though made in the most friendly spirit, are far from being complimentary to our Southern brethren, and would no doubt be rejected by them. Indeed the testimonies which they gave thirty and fifty years ago, denouncing "the enslaving of one part of the human race"—slaveholding—prove that they were fully aware of the enormous criminality of the act—and of the wrongs necessarily involved in it:

that they are not "in the dark," but do know what it is which they receive into the Church.

Moreover the undersigned humbly submits, that if the apology here alluded to is founded in truth: if our Southern brethren are "in the dark"—then that fact constitutes even a stronger reason for some action on the part of the Association. If God in his providence has placed us in friendly relations with a Church, so far behind the spirit of the age and the spirit of the Gospel, then it is plainly our duty to exert ourselves with the utmost earnestness to give them light. We are bound to argue and expostulate with them with Christian faithfulness, and without ceasing; we should allow no opportunity to pass without setting before them our solemn testimony as to their position and sin. Unless we do so, we cannot relieve ourselves from an intelligent and deliberate participation in that sin, which in them is a sin of ignorance. "Who knoweth whether we are come [to a better light] for such a time as this?"

At this stage of the argument we are met by an appeal to the Scriptures, considered by those who propose it as final and unanswerable. It is stated in somewhat this form. "There were slaveholders in the primitive Churches; slaveholders admitted by the Apostles, or allowed to be in the Churches without rebuke from the Apostles, and receiving only directions how to conduct as slaveholders. We have then divine authority for the admission of slaveholders to the Church. We have no right to reject from the Church those whom the Apostles admitted; and still less right to demand that our sister Churches shall set up an unscriptural or anti-scriptural test of Church membership; and of course ought not to expostulate with them when they are only imitating the action of the Apostles."

To the facts as alleged, we reply

1st. That modern Churches have not considered themselves bound to a literal imitation of Apostolic example in laying down the conditions of Church membership, but have considered themselves at liberty, while adhering to the general principles of the Bible, to apply those principles to the changing exigencies of society. Thus for instance, in some of the Churches founded by the missionaries of the American Board, a body which has been very cautious to adjust its modes of procedure to the standard of the Bible as they understand it—they make a pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, a condition of Church membership. Now it has never been pretended that the Apostles ever required any such pledge from those whom they admitted to the Church, although there was intemperance in primitive Churches. But the demand for such a condition in those Churches must be justified from the fact that circumstances justified them in thus departing from a literal imitation of Apostolic example: or rath-



er they allege, that by requiring this condition, they are, in *their circumstances*, carrying out the true idea of the Apostles in establishing Churches, which was to bring in converted men, and keep out bad men. The American Board, has never hinted any disapprobation of this departure from Apostolic example, though very vigilant and circumspect in adhering to Scripture.

Yet further : some Churches sustained by the American Board, excommunicate members *who use tobacco* : a condition which surely cannot be drawn from any literal example of the Apostles. The General Assembly, after long deliberation, did by solemn vote recommend to the thousands of Churches under their care, to discipline those members who practised *dancing*, a course for which they could plead no rule or precedent from Scripture, and which they only justified by the allegation, that these plans and recommendations, *under present exigencies*, were adapted in their view to preserve the purity and holiness of the Churches.

The Committee find a precedent in point in the recent case of the Rev. Baptist Noel, of England. It is well known that he has withdrawn from the Episcopal Church, and his separation with the reasons for it, have met with general approbation among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of the United States : at least we have seen in none of the papers patronized by those denominations, any censure passed on him or his arguments. In justification of his course he says, "I have long had doubts about the propriety of a connection between the Church and the State." "I have come to agree with a writer, that a man is responsible for the sins of a communion to which he belongs," and "therefore I have determined that I must leave you."

All these arguments apply with peculiar force to the case now under consideration. The connection between Slavery and the Church, or rather the cherished existence within the Church of slaveholding, "utterly at variance with the law of God"—"a violation of the most sacred rights of man"—"founded in unrighteousness," is far more doubtful than a mere connection between Church and State. When a sin like that, is intelligently and deliberately and perseveringly maintained in the Church, each member of that Church "is responsible for the sins of the denomination," and must be bound solemnly to protest or withdraw, or both.

If then, precedents are worth any thing, we have abundant precedent for taking a course, in the circumstances before us, not in literal imitation of the example of the Apostles. If we *may* in *any case*, depart from Apostolic example, then such departure does not, in and of itself prove a given case of departure to be wrong. We are left to argue the point on the general grounds of a holy expediency. The question after all still remains, whether slavery is not *under present circumstances* such an abomination, such a

violation of right and justice, as to call for the discipline of the Church. The alleged departure then from a literal imitation of the Apostles, proves nothing as to the case now before us, even if there were any such departure, which of itself admits of grave doubt.

2d. But still further: it is an admitted principle in the application of precedents, that they must prove the *precise point*, for which they are adduced. If they do not touch that point, they prove nothing at all. Now what is the *precise point* in question, between us and those who differ from us. Is it this, *whether slaveholders should be admitted to the Church?* If so, then the fact that slaveholders were admitted to Apostolic Churches, would be a precedent precisely in point, though subject to qualifications stated under the first head. But that is not the question. The point now to be decided is this. The Churches with whom we correspond, admit slaveholders, as such, to the Church, *without demanding any proof in individual cases*, that his particular slaveholding is right, or extenuated by his individual circumstances. What we maintain is, that while slaveholders may be admitted to the Church, yet the system is such an outrage on human rights — one involving “such a gross violation of the most sacred rights of human nature,” that no slaveholder ought to be admitted or retained in the Church, *without proof that his connection with such a system of abominations is an innocent or justifiable one.*

Now if precedents are sought in Apostolic example, they must be *precedents of the very thing to be proved.* Those who differ from us are bound then not only to shew, that the Apostles admitted slaveholders, *but that they admitted them without demanding proof from each individual that his connection with the system was justifiable*, or at least so extenuated as to be consistent with Christian character. They must prove this, or they prove nothing. But is this proved? By no means. It is never even attempted. If challenged to the proof they would unquestionably answer,—there is no such proof: the Scriptures are profoundly silent on the subject: they give us no information at all as to the questions or tests in detail, which the Apostles applied to those who wished for admission to their Churches. Very well: we accept the reply. But in what condition then is the argument left? Why just here: that *on the very point, on which we differ the Scriptures say nothing.* For the question on which we differ is not, whether there were actually some persons in the primitive Churches, who sustained the relation of slaveholders. That we admit fully, for the sake of the argument—(though by no means prepared to do so in reality,) but here, we concede freely that some slaveholders *were* members of the primitive Churches.

But Southern Churches admit slaveholders without demanding any proof that individual slaveholders who ask admission to their Churches, are justified in sustaining that relation. For that course, we ask Scriptural authority. They produce none. The propriety of this course they maintain; we deny. They as maintaining the affirmation are bound to the proof: and by the nature of argument, to the proof from Scripture, or their position entirely falls.

Since then on the very point on which we differ there is no precedent nor Scripture proof exactly to the point, we are left to apply to the case, the general principles of the Scriptures. What are these principles and how applied. Thus as we conceive.

American slavery is a system of abominations: "a violation of the most sacred rights of human nature"—"founded on injustice and violence"—"the sum of all villainies"—"utterly at variance with the laws of God." Connection with such a system is *prima facie* evidence of wrong doing and of a bad heart: just as connection with the business of traffic in intoxicating drinks, is *prima facie* evidence of wrong—just as one's habitual and voluntary presence in a gambling house, is *prima facie* evidence of wrong—just as often being seen entering a house of bad fame, is *prima facie* evidence of being wrong.

As we know that it was a fundamental aim of the Apostles to rear up holy Churches, filled with holy members, we have a right to assert, that they would not admit persons voluntarily connected with such a system of abominations, without a careful inquiry into the nature of their connection, without ascertaining whether in each particular case, the individual was justified in retaining this connection. We have a right to make this inference, just as certainly, as without any explicit declaration either way, we have a right to infer, that the Apostles, when admitting persons once connected with any *other* of the systems of abomination then prevailing in the Roman empire, would inquire into the candidates' present views, on that particular abomination.

Now what have they to allege against this. Not a fact—not the shadow of a fact. They say that slaveholders were members of the primitive Churches. Very well, we admit that; and admit further, that they may be so now, *if their continuance in slaveholding can be proved to be just.* BUT THAT MUST BE PROVED.

In view of the previous facts and arguments, the following resolutions are proposed for the consideration of the Association:

"Whereas this Association has long viewed with deep sorrow the fearful prevalence of slaveholding among the members and ministers of the Presbyterian Churches in the slaveholding States,

And whereas believing as we do the dangerous tendency of this

sin, and moreover assenting to the solemn judgment of the General Assembly that slaveholding "is utterly at variance with the law of God," and "is a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature"—we have hoped that the proper judicatories of the Presbyterian Churches would take decided measures to call each slaveholder in the Church to account, and allow no slaveholding but that "which on examination had been proved to be involuntary or necessary."

And whereas we have reason to believe that such investigation is never made, but that slaveholders are received and retained in the Church, and that they are not required to render to their *slaves* the treatment which is due to *men and women*; but do systematically withhold from their slaves the rights of men;

Therefore resolved, that we do hereby express to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, our deep regret for such fellowship with slaveholding; we would remonstrate with them for thus encouraging a system of demoralizing and dangerous tendencies, and convey to them our ardent wishes that for the honor of our common Christianity, they would speedily aim to remove this sin from their Churches.

Resolved, that our delegates to the next meeting of the General Assembly be directed to present the foregoing Report and Resolutions to that body."

All which is respectfully submitted,

G. W. PERKINS.

Meriden, June 15, 1849.